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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: UNAMI: JULY 30 SECURITY AGREEMENT REFERENDUM MUST  
WAIT

REF: A. BAGHDAD 3416  
[1](#)B. BAGHDAD 1158

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Robert S. Ford for reason 1.4 (d  
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[1](#)1. (C) Ref A reported that SRSB De Mistura planned to meet Speaker of Parliament Sammarraie on June 10 to convey UNAMI's technical assessment that there is not sufficient time to organize a credible referendum on the Security Agreement by July 30. Acting Political Counselor confirmed evening of June 10 with Deputy SRSB Andrew Gilmour that the meeting had taken place. Gilmour said that De Mistura had passed the message as expected to Sammarraie, who had "taken it well." UNAMI SRSB told us June 10 at a farewell dinner hosted by the Ambassador that the UNAMI message about the need to delay the referendum past July 30 was firm. The Iraqis could blame the delay on the UN if they wanted, he said.

[1](#)2. (C) UNAMI Chief Electoral Advisor Sandra Mitchell provided us with a copy of her three-page memorandum to De Mistura outlining the basis for UNAMI's technical assessment. One concern is the lack of a referendum law establishing who votes, thresholds for voter turnout, criteria for passage or failure, the question to be asked, and provisions regarding how electoral complaints will be adjudicated. She noted that international best practice is to have an electoral framework established five to eight months prior to an election. She also wrote that, despite IHEC's reminders to Parliament (ref B), the referendum has not been funded. (Note: Mitchell also confirmed to us that, June 10 press reports notwithstanding, IHEC has not received the \$100 million it has requested and needs in order to organize the referendum. End note.) In addition, the lack of a clearly articulated referendum question makes it difficult to implement an effective public outreach campaign to inform citizens about the referendum and the impact of passage or rejection. Finally, a July 30 referendum would have to use an out-of-date voter registry, which could harm public acceptance of the results.

[1](#)3. (C) The Speaker's apparent acceptance without objection of the UN assessment, combined with our understanding (Ref B) that President Talibani, PM Maliki and the Speaker had agreed to find a legal way to postpone the referendum at least until parliamentary elections in January 2010, make it less likely than it seemed a few days ago that a referendum will be held anytime soon. This apparent political deal, the announcement of a delay by Iraqi government spokesman Ali Debbagh and the UNAMI technical justification all point to the referendum's postponement to January 2010, if it ever happens at all.  
HILL